

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 04815 090844Z

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TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR, US

SUBJECT: COMMENT ON VOA PROGRAMMING

USIA FOR IBS AND IEE

REFS: (A) MOSCOW 4558 (B) STATE 077169 (C) MOSCOW 4750

1. SAME JEWISH ACTIVIST SOURCE WHO PROVIDED INFORMATION RE VOA JAMMING (REF C) ALSO TOOK OCCASION TO INFORM EMBOFF THAT MANY REGULAR LISTENERS, NOT ONLY JEWS, WERE DISAPPOITED WITH RECENT VOA BROADCASTS. WHILE THEY FEEL VOA COVERAGE OF U.S. DEVELOPMENTS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF LIFE AND SOCIETY IN U.S. ARE EXCELLENT, THEY FAULT VOA FOR LACK OF DEEP ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL EVENTS AND OF SOVIET INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION. VOA WAS DESCRIBED AS "VERY WEAK" ON BOTH HISTORY AND CURRENT EVENTS PROGRAMS IN COPARISON WITH BBC AND DEUTSCHE WELLE. SOURCE SAID MOST OFHIS FRIENDS GAVE VOA ONLY THIRD PLACE AMONG BIG THREE.

2. SOURCE SAID BBC WAS FAR AND AWAY BEST STATION AND PRAISED ANNOUNCERS ANATOLIY GOLDBERG AND MAURICE LETI (PHONETIC) FOR THEIR COMMENTARY AND ANALYSIS OF WORLD
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MOSCOW 04815 090844Z

AND SOVIET EVENTS DURING EVENING PROGRAMS. HE GAVE

EXAMPLE OF RECENT FOUR-PART BBC PROGRAM ON "HISTORY OF ORIGINS OF COLD WAR," WHICH HE SAID BALANCED QUITE WELL SOVIET PROPAGANDA ON SAME PERIOD, AND WHICH HAS APPARENTLY EARNED MUCH ATTENTION AMONG REGULAR FOREIGN RADIO LISTENERS. SOURCE ALSO COMMENTED THAT RECENT VOA PROGRAMS ON LAST DAYS OF WW II WERE USEFUL AND THAT MANY HOPED THEY WOULD BE CONTINUED INTO COVERAGE OF POST-WAR PERIOD. SOURCE SAID HE AND HIS FRIENDS WOULD URGE VOA TO CONTINUE PROGRAMS ON WAR INTO SUMMER SINCE SOVIET PROPAGANDA WAS VERY STRONG ON THEME THAT SOVIET UNION ALONE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR WINNING OF WAR AND THAT WEST HAD IN FACT WANTED TO WAIT UNTIL HITLER DEFEATED SOVIET ARMY.

3. SPEAKING OF PATTERN OF LISTENERSHIP OF FOREIGN RADIO, SOURCE SAID THAT MOSCOW LISTENERS GENERALLY DID NOT BOTHER WITH VOA MORNING PROGRAM (6-8 A.M.) BECAUSE THEY WERE EITHER SLEEPING OR HURRYING OFF TO WORK AT THAT TIME. SOME LISTENED TO AFTERNOON PROGRAM (1500-1700) WHEN THEY COULD, BUT THEY FOUND IT MAINLY REHASH OF PREVIOUS EVENING'S NEWS. LARGEST PART OF FOREIGN RADIO LISTENERSHIP IS DURING EVENING HOURS WITH BIG AUDIENCE FOR BBC 1945-2100 PROGRAM, DEUTSCHE WELLE 2100-2200 PROGRAM, AND VOA 2200 NEWS. ON LATTER, SOURCE FELT "REVIEW OF AMERICAN PRESS" ITEMS WAS MOST INTERESTING AND USEFUL, BUT REPEATED CRITICISM OF GENERAL NEWS COVERAGE AS BEING "SUPERFICIAL."

4. SOURCE ALSO COMMENTED ON "MISTAKES" AND "OUTDATED" USAGES AND STYLE IN VOA RUSSIAN AND SAID MANY HAD IMPRESSION THAT BOTH BBC AND DEUTSCHE WELLE WERE MORE CAREFUL WITH THEIR TRANSLATIONS AND GENERAL USE OF LANGUAGE.

5. COMMENT: EMBASSY AWARE OF CONTINUING VOA EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE LANGUAGE ERRORS AND GENERALLY IMPROVE OVERALL LANGUAGE QUALITY OF ITS RUSSIAN BROADCASTS. EMBASSY ALSO POINTS OUT THAT VIEWS EXPRESSED ABOVE PERTAIN MAINLY TO SPECIAL AUDIENCE AND ARE NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENTATIVE OF BROAD VOA LISTENERSHIP IN USSR. THIS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MOSCOW 04815 090844Z

AUDIENCE, HOWEVER, LISTENS VERY CAREFULLY TO ALL MAJOR FOREIGN BROADCASTERS TO SOVIET UNION, AND THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THEIR CRITICISMS WORTHY OF CAREFUL CONSIDERATION. IN AN EFFORT TO MAKE THIS PARTICULAR CRITICISM MORE SPECIFIC AND MORE HELPFUL TO THE VOICE, SOURCE HAS AGREED TO CATALOGUE EXAMPLES OF TYPES OF ERRORS MENTIONED PARA 4 FOR TRANSMISSION TO AGENCY.
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